

## **Child Welfare Emergency Services (CWES) Contract Questions & Answers**

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**Highlights** indicate new information since last published.

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### **1. Referral to CWES and Screening**

**Q1:** What is a contractor's responsibility to provide its full CWES array to a child from outside its contracted counties/CWES area?

**A1:** When referral to CWES is considered, referrals should be made to the CWES contractor serving the county where the child lives. These referrals should receive all the CWES available, ranging from the initial screening to determine if alternatives to shelter placement are appropriate to other interventions available. However, a CWES contractor is not obligated to provide its full array of CWES components to children from outside its contracted counties/CWES geographical area.

All contractors should be knowledgeable of other CWES providers so that information can be shared with referral sources.

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Most likely, referrals from outside a contractor's area will be for the shelter component of CWES after it has been decided other less restrictive alternatives are not appropriate in lieu of placement. In this case, the screening should have been completed by the CWES contractor where the child lives and information from that screening should follow the child to the shelter placement. The shelter of placement would not be obligated to offer its CWES array to that child but it would be expected to keep that child safe and to work with the referral source to get that child successfully discharged when appropriate.

**Q2:** Are CWES referrals from counties outside a program's geographical boundaries required to be screened for CWES alternatives and recorded online?

**A2:** A CWES program is required to provide screenings to all CWES referrals from each county in its catchment area that is defined in its contract. These must be recorded online. If a referral from outside this catchment area is being made for shelter placement only, it has already been determined that shelter placement is the service needed.

**Q3:** Can CWES serve referrals outside the age groups identified for a program (e.g., a seven year old referred when the program serves 11 – 18 year olds) or if the referral is not intended for shelter at the time of referral?

**A3:** The CWES target population is referrals from DHS, JCS, or law enforcement who can be lawfully placed in emergency juvenile shelter care pursuant to conditions described in Iowa Code section 232.21; CWES focusses on children who these entities would otherwise refer for shelter care placement if appropriate alternative services were not available. CWES can serve children up to the age of 18 years.

There should be uniform understanding that CWES is intended for diversion from shelter placement. If that isn't the intent of a referral, other services should be considered and it would be appropriate for CWES to recommend other resources in a community.

Age isn't necessarily a determining factor for the provision of CWES alternatives to avoid shelter placement. While shelter care in general is not intended for children younger than 12 years old, there are occasions when placement of a child younger than this occurs and when it is documented for the court shelter is the only option.

If a legitimate referral is made to CWES to avoid shelter placement for a youth younger than a program's defined ages (again, let's say 11- 18), CWES services to avoid shelter could be provided to that youth. The key is that the child must be eligible for and intended for shelter in the absence of alternatives.

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If alternatives are not successful to avoid shelter placement, consultation should occur with the referral source so that the referral worker can find an appropriate placement.

**2. CWES Screening Requirements and Court Orders**

**Q1:** Which screening tool is approved for CWES use?

**A1:** All contractors must use the uniform screening tool developed collectively by the contractors and DHS. Contractors may additionally use other tools if they wish.

**Q2:** While screening to determine the viability of using alternatives lesser restrictive than placement into a shelter bed is the general expectation for all CWES referrals, is screening needed when a child is referred directly to a shelter bed, e.g., when there is a court order directly to shelter?

**A2:** All court orders directly to shelter will be recognized. These situations represent cases for which there is no opportunity to divert from placement at the time of referral. However, as this program evolves, the Department is encouraging movement toward uniform practice around CWES screening and bed use. Referral sources and our private partners should work closely together to have case discussions with the appropriate CWES contractor before court actions are final, to identify whether or not available alternatives can avoid an out of home placement. This will lead to opportunities to inform the courts about what is available around the state so that alternatives to beds can be considered.

At the very least, if a child goes directly to shelter without other CWES screening or intervention attempts, the situation should be immediately evaluated post-placement to determine if appropriate alternatives can be used to shorten bed stays. (11/14/11)

**3. Access to the Emergency Shelter Component of CWES and the Admission and Discharge Protocol**

**a. Shelter placement referrals from across Iowa**

**Q1:** Can CWES contractors provide shelter beds to children referred from outside their contracted counties/CWES area?

**A1:** Yes. Additionally, shelters cannot deny referrals simply because the referral is from outside the counties covered in the CWES contract. All referrals for shelter placement must be accepted unless there is a reason for denial that is mutually agreed to by the contractor and the referring worker. When a contractor

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wants to deny admission or requests an unplanned discharge, the Emergency Juvenile Shelter Care Admission and Discharge Protocol must be followed regardless of where the referral or placement originated. While it is preferable to place children into shelter as close to their home as possible, Iowa shelter beds serve children from anywhere in the state. (11/14/11)

### **b. Unallocated bed use**

**Q1:** What is an “unallocated” shelter bed and is it necessary to get approval to use one?

**A1:** Unallocated beds are those not included in the number of guaranteed and allocated payment beds identified in a CWES contract. Unallocated and non-guaranteed for payment beds are also identified in a CWES contract for DHS use and they are paid for when use is approved. When a shelter placement is needed and a contractor has no vacancies in its contracted guaranteed bed capacity, approval must be provided by the Service Area Manager or designee according to the process outlined in the CWES Statewide Emergency Juvenile Shelter Unallocated Bed Placement Protocol to use another bed. In all cases of approved unallocated bed use, children must be moved into a contracted guaranteed bed as soon as one is available. (11/14/11)

**Q2:** Can unallocated bed use be approved up to a shelter's licensed capacity.

**A2:** Yes, if the CWES shelter is staffed to accommodate the placement. In no case shall a CWES contractor provide a shelter bed that exceeds its licensed capacity.

**Q3:** During the course of this contract, across the board guaranteed bed payment reductions in response to reduced funding by the Legislature resulted in most contractors' guaranteed payment beds number to be something less than a whole number. For example, something like a change from 8 beds down to 6.6 beds guaranteed and allocated. In a case like this, when will it be necessary to seek Service Area Manager or designee approval for use of an unallocated bed?

**A3:** For this purpose, contractors should round up to the nearest whole number and when that number is reached, approval to use an unallocated bed should be sought. Using the example above, an unallocated bed would not have to be approved until 7 youth occupied 7 beds. Approval would not be needed if there were 6 children in placement. “Rounding up” to 7 would mean that one more bed was still available.

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**c. Holding CWES shelter beds**

**Q1:** A referral worker needed a CWES shelter placement but could not bring the child until the next day. Can beds be held vacant for this reason?

**A1:** No. CWES shelter beds may be “held” for an impending placement only when the youth is in transit to the shelter.

**4. Financial and Statistical Report (FSR) and CWES**

**Q1:** Will it be necessary to use the FSR (a.k.a. “cost report”) annually under the CWES contract?

**A1:** Yes. These forms have been used annually for many years to report shelter costs. Beginning with the SFY 2012 contract, CWES contractors shall continue to record and report shelter costs as they have in the past. Regarding funding for other, non-bed CWES activities, contractors shall select one of the unused columns on the form to report other CWES costs. (11/14/11)

**5. Performance Measures**

**a. Safety Outcome 2 (Critical Incidents)**

**Q1:** Safety Outcome 2 of the Performance Measures for CWES calls for a reduction of the number of critical incidents from 2013 to 2014. Additionally, the types of critical incidents have increased. Outcomes could be affected, even skewed, due to the possible increase in the number of youth placed and the possibility that youth placed have more problem behaviors than in the past.

**A2:** The types of critical incidents to be reported were redefined with the November 1, 2011 amendment after discussions with CWES (and Foster Group Care contractors).

Outcomes may be affected by an increase in the number of kids and that the kids seem to have more problem behaviors. These possibilities have been discussed with contractors at the quarterly meetings and it was noted there are a number of variables that could affect a child’s behavior. These are the things the Department wants to identify with contractors as these contracts move forward, to determine what factors are causing critical incidents and how contractors address them. Contractors should continue to explore methodologies to achieve a reduction in Critical Incidents.

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**b. Well-Being Outcomes 1 and 2 (school attendance and providing school information, respectively)**

**Q1:** A child in foster group care placement attended the on-campus school which provides school programming for the community also. The child was discharged to the same contractor's CWES shelter program. For Well-Being Performance Measure 2, does the contractor complete the requirement for sending school-related information to the referral worker at the end of each placement, even though the child remains in the same school?

**A1:** Yes. Both FGCS and CWES contractors must report independently of one another, in compliance with each of the individual contracts. Admission and discharge dates would be unique to each placement.

**c. Permanency Outcome 1 (Diversion)**

**Q1:** Many children are referred to us with a shelter placement order in place already. While we recognize that part of this is resolved with further education within and among all partners, is there a way to recognize this when outcomes are measured?

**A1:** For the purposes of measuring outcomes related to diversion from placement, this is accounted for when contractors enter this information appropriately using the online data entry system. Referrals to shelter for which there is no opportunity to divert are not counted toward this measure.

**6. Data Collection and Reporting**

**Q1:** Should Section 1 of the CWES workbook include all referrals to CWES?

**A1:** It should include all those referrals that received alternatives to CWES shelter placement. Include in Section 1 the youth who are: 1) referred to CWES without a court order to shelter but who are being considered for a shelter placement (thus, facilitating the use of alternatives in lieu of placement); or, 2) those that may have been referred with a court order but ultimately other CWES alternatives were used instead of placement when, in collaboration with and agreement of the court, placement was not required after all. No contractor or referral worker shall pursue services that are contrary to the court order.

**Q1a:** What about those that went to shelter?

**A1a:** No. CWES shelter placements should be reported on the census report and in the CWES narrative; i.e., if a referral comes with a court order in hand, there is no choice but to place into shelter. Alternatives cannot be used to divert from placement unless the court order allows something other than shelter

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placement. These situations can be addressed in the CWES narrative report Question 10 by discussing what was done on behalf of these placements to reduce length of placement.

**Q2:** If a youth was placed in CWES shelter from outside of that contractor's geographical contracted area, should that be reported in Section 1A and explained in the narrative?

**A2:** It could be reported in 1A and explained in the narrative if the CWES referral is considered "not accepted" to that particular contractor's CWES alternatives to shelter placement. While the provision of CWES alternative services is generally limited to the youth living in a contractor's geographical area, Iowa children can be and are placed in any juvenile shelter across Iowa, depending on the needs at the time of placement. All placements into shelter for which Iowa is billed are reported in the census reports.

### **7. Online Performance Measure Data Entry System**

**Q1:** Can data entries be made online 24 hours a day and 7 days per week?

**A1:** System users approved by each contractor can access this system at any time. New users will be provided access upon request by the contractor to the respective Service Contract Specialist assigned to the contract. The system is generally unavailable daily from about 7-10 p.m. and total downtime is dependent on Mainframe maintenance. These times are approximate.

### **8. Diversion Considerations**

**Q1:** If a JCO or LE calls about a runaway from counties outside a CWES county catchment area can this be considered a situation where a diversion from shelter is not possible? The youth would likely be placed in shelter to await parental pick-up.

**A1:** Yes, this can be considered a shelter placement. Situationally, this is the same as a youth referred to CWES with a "court order to shelter placement in hand," which is how we've referred to this before even though a court order is not involved in these cases (at least not yet). You could apply your CWES screening as needed for youth from within the county catchment area, but these are not likely situations that could be considered for diversion. They may be entered

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online as a referral with a court order to shelter; therefore the system will not count these referrals as possible diversions.

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